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CIA nominee put in awkward spot

By Bob Minzesheimer
USA TODAY

The Tower Commission report adds to the questions that could block, or at least delay, Robert Gates' confirmation as CIA director.

At issue: how much the National Security Council, pushing the Iranian arms deal, tainted the "objectivity" of CIA intelligence reports on Iran. Gates, at the time, ran the CIA's intelligence operation.

The commission found the NSC was "actively involved" in preparing a CIA report in 1985 that hinted at encouraging allies to sell arms to Iran.

"It is a matter of concern," it said, if "the strong views of NSC staff members were allowed to influence the (CIA) intelligence judgments."

It adds: "It is critical that the line between intelligence and advocacy of a particular policy be preserved. ... In this instance, the CIA came close enough to warrant concern."

Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Ga., said that raises "key questions" for Gates, whose nomination is being considered by the Senate intelligence committee.

Gates also can't remember what he told White House aides last year at the time they were compiling a phony chronology.

"This could cause some trouble," said Sen. William Cohen, R-Maine, the panel's vice-chairman.

By L. Mark, UPI

GATES: May have to remain acting director until congressional committees, special prosecutor complete investigations.

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